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Gone for More Than Five Decades, Priest Returns to St. Joseph's



On July 1, 2014, St. Joseph Catholic Parish and School welcomed a new priest - Monsignor Richard Huneger. However, St. Joseph is not new for Monsignor Huneger. In fact, he is pretty familiar with both the church and the school. As a child, Huneger attended the school for first through eighth grades from 1952-1960 and served as an altar server for the parish from fourth through eighth grades. "Nothing but fond memories," Huneger said. "It always felt special, being near the Capitol, and therefore, faith as important as politics."

Huneger says he loved going to school, and he had a nearly perfect attendance – he only missed one day in his eight years at St. Joseph. His family was close to the school - his father worked at the Statesman Journal newspaper, just a block away from the school - and his mother was the St. Joseph School secretary from 1962-1974. He has fond memories of being a student - from playing marbles in the gravel on the playground, to the priests (Fr. Vincent Cunniff and Fr. Joe Beno) and the Holy Names Sisters coming to class or talking to the students on the playground, to the daily morning offering in school, which Huneger still does to start his day. "As far as I can tell, I got an excellent academic and religious formation in every respect," Huneger said.

Huneger's K-12 education continued at Mt. Angel Seminary High School from 1960-1964 and Mt. Angel Seminary College from 1964-1968. He then went on to the University of Innsbruck, Austria from 1968-1972. He became an ordained priest on June 23, 1973. "Except for Kindergarten in South Dakota, in Lincoln School, (Catholic education is) the only education I really know. I have always lived in a parish with a Catholic school, all through my 42 years since finishing seminary," Huneger said. "I like to think that it's just an integral part of parish life, optimally lived, without prejudice, of course, to parishes without Catholic schools." Monsignor Huneger says he hopes he can survive with how much is going on at St. Joseph Parish and School. "Will I be up to it?" Huneger asks himself. "I've heard a lot of good, dedicated people keep things moving along well, and not to worry," he said reassuringly.

As a parish priest, Huneger is not new to shifting around different parishes. He has served at St. John the Apostle (Oregon City), St. John the Baptist (Milwaukie), Star of the Sea (Astoria), Holy Cross Parish (Portland), Madeleine Parish (Portland) and St. Rose of Lima (Portland). He returned back to serve at St. John the Apostle from 2006 to 2014 before coming to Salem where many memories were made for him. "Having been gone for 54 years (from St. Joseph), I am looking forward to the 150th Anniversary celebration of the

school on May 31, 2015,” Huneger said. “It’s a good way to start getting back in touch.”

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